BETTERSAFE
WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

ARE YOU AT RISK FOR COPD?
What You Need to Know & What You Can Do

Your lungs are a pair of light, spongy, air-filled organs located on either side of your chest. If you're good to your lungs, they will be good to you—flawlessly providing fresh oxygen through your entire bloodstream. In fact, with only a few exceptions, your lungs are likely to stay healthy throughout your lifetime as long as you take some simple steps to protect them.

This isn't to say that lung disease isn't a real or popular threat in the United States. In fact, chronic repository conditions like obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are the third-leading cause of death in the U.S. after heart disease and cancer. The American Lung Association (ALA) estimates that more than 11 million Americans have been diagnosed with COPD and millions more likely have the condition but are unaware of it.

AM I AT RISK FOR COPD?

If you're a smoker or have frequent exposure to other irritants like second-hand smoke, air pollution or workplace fumes, you may be at risk for developing COPD. Unfortunately, the symptoms for COPD are similar to symptoms of other conditions (like a cold) which may not seem that serious, and are often ignored. If you are a smoker and/or are regularly exposed to second-hand smoke or irritants like smog or workplace chemicals, contact your doctor if you experience these symptoms:

A cough that worsens in the morning. This is one of the first signs of COPD.

Excessive mucus/phlegm. If you're exposed to irritants, your lungs will produce additional mucus to trap or keep inhaled particles out.

Shortness of breath and wheezing. Those with COPD may experience shortness of breath with increased physical activity, or, if in later stages, it could happen even without exertion. Another symptom of COPD includes wheezing, which is a whistling or squeaking sound that occurs while breathing.

Fatigue. Many people experience fatigue, which is a common condition. If you're experiencing the symptoms above and also feel a significant loss of energy or stamina, see your doctor.

Only a doctor can diagnose COPD. He/she will give you tests—such as measuring your breathing volume or X-raying your chest—to determine if you have the condition. These tests can also help to rule out or diagnose other conditions.

YOUR RESPIRATORY RATE

Your respiratory rate is the number of breaths you take in a one-minute period (at rest, not during exertion or during times of stress). A normal respiration rate for a healthy adult falls between eight to 16 breaths per minute. Respiration rates may increase if you're ill, have a fever or suffer from other medical conditions. If you notice that your respiration rate is not falling within the normal range of **eight to 16 breaths** in a one-minute period call your doctor right away or seek emergency care if you have any trouble breathing.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your left lung is about 10 percent smaller than your right lung, which allows for room for a small indent where your heart is located.